

**Amendments to the Claims:**

The listing of claims below will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Claims 1-12 (canceled)

Claim 13. (currently amended) ~~The polymer A composition of claim 11 comprising:~~

water soluble copolymer formed as the polymerization reaction product of acrylamidomethylpropanesulfonic acid or salt thereof and alpha, beta-unsaturated carbonyl compound; and

alkali metal salt of carboxylic acid;

wherein the water soluble copolymer comprises from 5 to 95 wt.% structural units derived from 2-acrylamido-2-methylpropanesulfonic acid or salt thereof, and from 5 to 95 wt.% structural units derived from acrylamide, vinylpyrrolidone, acrylic acid or salt thereof, and 0 to 5 wt.% structural units derived from an at least bifunctional cross-linking agent; and wherein the alkali metal salt comprises at least one alkali metal salt of C1 to C3 carboxylic acid.

Claim 14. (currently amended) ~~The polymer~~ composition of claim 13 wherein the cross-linking agent is N,N'-methylenebis[2-propenamide].

Claims 15-16 (canceled)

Claim 17. (currently amended) ~~The polymer composition of claim 16~~ A composition comprising:

water soluble copolymer formed as the polymerization reaction product of acrylamidomethylpropanesulfonic acid or salt thereof and alpha, beta-unsaturated carbonyl compound;

alkali metal salt of carboxylic acid; and  
alkali metal salt of at least  $\pm$  one halide;  
wherein the copolymer is substantially hydrated by water and the alkali metal salt of  
carboxylic acid is substantially dissolved.

Claim 18. (currently amended) The ~~polymer~~ composition of claim ~~16~~ 17 wherein the alkali metal salt of at least  $\pm$  one halide is selected from the sodium, potassium and cesium salts of chloride, bromide and mixtures thereof.

Claim 19. (currently amended) ~~The polymer composition of claim 16~~ A composition comprising:

water soluble copolymer formed as the polymerization reaction product of  
acrylamidomethylpropanesulfonic acid or salt thereof and alpha, beta-unsaturated  
carbonyl compound; and

alkali metal salt of carboxylic acid;  
wherein the copolymer is substantially hydrated by water and the alkali metal salt of  
carboxylic acid is substantially dissolved, developing an apparent viscosity of at least 20 cPs., a plastic viscosity of at least 15 cPs, and a yield point of at least 5 lb./100 ft<sup>2</sup> when dissolved in cesium formate brine at a concentration of 2 pounds per barrel and measured at 120 degrees F.

Claim 20. (currently amended) The ~~polymer~~ composition of claim 19 retaining at least 50 percent of its apparent viscosity after roller aging for 30 days at 375 degrees F and measured at 120 degrees F.

Claim 21. (currently amended) A process for preparing an aqueous ~~polymer~~ composition comprising:

water soluble copolymer formed as the polymerization reaction product of  
acrylamidomethylpropanesulfonic acid or salt thereof and alpha, beta-unsaturated  
carbonyl compound; and

alkali metal salt of carboxylic acid wherein the copolymer is substantially hydrated by water and the alkali metal salt of carboxylic acid is substantially dissolved,  
~~according to claim 16~~ comprising hydrating the polymer composition.

Claim 22. (currently amended) A process for preparing an aqueous polymer composition according to claim 21 wherein alkali metal salt of carboxylic acid is dissolved in an aqueous composition containing the water soluble copolymer.

Claim 23. (original) A process for preparing an aqueous polymer composition according to claim 21 wherein the water soluble copolymer is dissolved in a brine of alkali metal salt of carboxylic acid.

Claim 24. (original) A method of carrying out well-drilling or well-servicing operations comprising the use of an aqueous well service fluid comprising water soluble copolymer having functionality including at least sulfonate groups and carboxylate groups, hydrated in a brine solution.

Claim 25. (original) The method of claim 24 wherein the water soluble copolymer is substantially fully hydrated in the brine solution.

Claim 26. (original) An aqueous well service fluid comprising:  
water soluble copolymer having functionality including at least sulfonate groups and carboxylate groups, hydrated in a brine solution.

Claim 27. (original) The aqueous well servicing fluid of claim 26 wherein the water soluble copolymer is soluble in a brine of alkali metal salt of carboxylic acid.

Claim 28. (original) The aqueous well servicing fluid of claim 26 wherein the water soluble copolymer is substantially fully hydrated in the brine solution.

Claim 29. (original) Water soluble copolymer having functionality including at least sulfonate groups and carboxylate groups, which has a weight average molecular weight of at least 1,000,000 and develops an apparent viscosity of at least 20 cPs., a plastic viscosity of at least 15 cPs, and a yield point of at least 5 lb./100 ft<sup>2</sup> when substantially fully hydrated in cesium formate brine at a concentration of 2 pounds per barrel and measured at 120 degrees F.

Claim 30. (original) Water soluble copolymer of claim 29 having weight average molecular weight between 1,000,000 and 5,000,000.

Claim 31. (original) Water soluble copolymer of claim 29 soluble in an amount of at least 4 lbs/bbl in a substantially saturated brine of alkali metal carboxylate selected from sodium, potassium and cesium salts of acetic and formic acids.

Claim 32. (original) Water soluble copolymer of claim 29 which retains at least 50 percent of its apparent viscosity after roller aging for 30 days at 375 degrees F and measured at 120 degrees F.

Claim 33. (original) Water soluble copolymer of claim 29 hydrated in a brine solution.

Claim 34. (original) Water soluble copolymer comprising the polymerization reaction product of acrylamidomethylpropanesulfonic acid or salt thereof and alpha, beta-unsaturated carbonyl compound, having weight average molecular weight of at least 1,000,000 and developing an apparent viscosity of at least 20 cPs., a plastic viscosity of at least cPs, and a yield point of at least 5 lbs./100 ft<sup>2</sup> when substantially fully hydrated in cesium formate brine at a concentration of 2 pounds per barrel and measured at 120 degrees F.

Claim 35. (original) Water soluble copolymer of claim 34 wherein the acrylamidomethylpropanesulfonic acid or salt thereof is 2-acrylamido-2-methylpropanesulfonic acid or salt thereof.

Claim 36. (original) Water soluble copolymer of claim 34 wherein the acrylamidomethylpropanesulfonic acid or salt thereof is 2-methyl-2[(1-oxo-2-propenyl)amino]-1-propanesulfonic acid or salt thereof.

Claim 37. (original) Water soluble copolymer of claim 34 having a 5 to 95 wt.% structural units derived from 2-methyl-2[(-oxo-2-propenyl)amino]-1-propanesulfonic acid or salt thereof, and 5 to 95 wt.% structural units derived from 2-propanoic acid or salt thereof.

Claim 38. (original) Water soluble copolymer of claim 34 having 40 to 80 wt.% structural units derived from 2-acrylamido-2-methylpropanesulfonic acid or salt thereof and 20 to 60 wt.% structural units derived from acrylamide, vinylpyrrolidone, acrylic acid or salt thereof.

Claim 39. (original) Water soluble copolymer of claim 38 having 0 to 5 wt.% structural units derived from at least bifunctional cross-linking agent.

Claim 37. (canceled) [ONLY THIS REDUNDANT SECOND INSTANCE OF CLAIM 37 IS CANCELED. PLEASE NOTE THAT THE FIRST INSTANCE OF CLAIM 37 ABOVE IS NOT CANCELED.]

Claim 38. (canceled) [ONLY THIS REDUNDANT SECOND INSTANCE OF CLAIM 38 IS CANCELED. PLEASE NOTE THAT THE FIRST INSTANCE OF CLAIM 38 ABOVE IS NOT CANCELED.]

Claim 39. (canceled) [ONLY THIS REDUNDANT SECOND INSTANCE OF CLAIM 39 IS CANCELED. PLEASE NOTE THAT THE FIRST INSTANCE OF CLAIM 39 ABOVE IS NOT CANCELED.]

Claim 40. (new) A composition comprising:

water soluble copolymer formed as the polymerization reaction product of acrylamidomethylpropanesulfonic acid or salt thereof and alpha, beta-unsaturated carbonyl compound; and

alkali metal salt of carboxylic acid;

wherein the water soluble copolymer has 5 to 95 wt.% structural units derived from 2-methyl-2-[(1-oxo-2-propenyl)amino]-1-propanesulfonic acid or salt thereof, and 5 to 95 wt.% structural units derived from 2-propanoic acid or salt thereof.

Claim 41. (new) The composition of claim 26 further comprising sodium salt of a carboxylic acid.

Claim 42. (new) The composition of claim 26 further comprising potassium salt of a carboxylic acid.

Claim 43. (new) The composition of claim 26 further comprising sodium salt of a carboxylic acid and potassium salt of a carboxylic acid.